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Servant-Leader

09.22.2009 | Faculty

A memorial Mass will be held at 12:05 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 29, at the Immaculate Conception Chapel at the University of Dayton for Nora Duffy, retired director of the office of continuing education.

Duffy, 91, died Sunday, Sept. 20. She began her University of Dayton career in 1961 as assistant director of continuing education. In 1966, she was promoted to the director's role, a position she held until her retirement in 1984. During her career, she also co-chaired the UD Arts Series, bringing visiting artists to campus. After retirement, she served as an informal adviser to the University of Dayton's Institute for Learning in Retirement, where she enrolled in classes until her late 80s.

"She was a woman of great faith. She truly was," said Julie Mitchell, assistant dean of special programs and continuing education at the University of Dayton who started in the office as a student employee under Duffy's mentorship. "This was someone who lived the Marianist charism."

Colleagues and friends described Duffy as a role model with a gentle approach. Someone who could get things done with a quiet efficiency. They admired her energy, cheerfulness and supportive nature. They called her a servant-leader.

"I love her because she helps me be better than I am," wrote Rocco Donatelli, assistant vice president for academic affairs, on the occasion of her retirement. "She personifies the spirit of Our Lady in all she does. The least chore is for her an eloquent expression of the ideals of service we all strive for. Every person who works with her wants to be like Nora in some way or other."

In 1987, Duffy received the Lackner Award, given annually to faculty and staff who, over a long period of time, embody the Catholic and Marianist character of the University of Dayton. She used the award's stipend to establish the Nora Duffy Award, which is presented annually to an adult learner who has overcome significant obstacles to achieve a baccalaureate degree and reflects the spirit of the Marianist tradition.

Born in New York City, she attended the Grace Institute of Business and Hunter College. Early in her career, she served as coordinator for recreation and education of Carroll Club Inc., a Catholic YWCA. She spent five years in Puerto Rico, where she was director of operations for the Catholic University of Puerto Rico.

According to a 1987 story in Campus Report, the University faculty and staff newspaper, Duffy had been "associated with almost every arts, ecumenical and continuing education program in the Miami Valley." She was a member of Holy Angels Church, the Miriam Guild and the Marianist faith community at Mount St. John.

The memorial Mass will be concelebrated by the Rev. Bertrand Buby, S.M., professor of theology, Mariology and scripture in the International Marian Research Institute, and the Rev. Dan Meyer, pastor at Holy Angels Church.